



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice Ghana

Ghana – GHA36511 – New Patriotic Party
– State protection – Political parties –
Communal violence
4 May 2010

1. Is the NDC still in power in Ghana?

The National Democratic Congress (NDC) remains in power in Ghana. The NDC's candidate John Atta Mills won the presidency and the party won a small majority in parliament in the December 2008 elections.¹ The NDC defeated the previous New Patriotic Party (NPP) Government by a thin margin.²

2. Is Ghana still regarded as stable?

Most observers judged Ghana to be a stable, democratic country with a free press, independent judiciary, largely apolitical military, and an active civil society.³ Ghana's stability is often cited as an example for other African countries to follow, a model of successful economic reforms and a progressive democratic society. A February 2010 BBC article called it a well-administered country by regional standards.² Such comments were echoed in a 2009 Brandeis University report.⁴

Election Overview

The country's last elections, held in 2008, were largely seen as free and fair. A 2010 US Department of State report described them as a peaceful transition of power, the second to have occurred between parties in the country's history.¹ *Africa Confidential* praised Ghana's relatively "cool response" to the "knife-edge national elections".⁵ There were some reported incidents of voter intimidation and election irregularities; however, these were "insufficient to have altered the outcome of the election". In the run up to the elections there were reports of violence between supporters of the two main parties, the NDC and the NPP. Clashes had occurred in Gushiegu District in the Northern Region resulting in six deaths and the burning of property. An NPP rally in Tamale was disrupted due to gunfire and there was a subsequent retaliatory attack on NDC supporters.⁶ Despite the isolated incidents of violence, the Commonwealth Observers Group noted that "the overall conduct of the campaign between

¹ US Department of State 2010, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009 – Ghana*, March – Attachment 1

² 'Country profile: Ghana' 2010, *BBC News*, 9 February

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1023355.stm - Accessed 27 April 2010 – Attachment 2

³ US Agency for International Development 2009, 'Ghana', November http://www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/countries/ghana/ - Accessed 27 April 2010 – Attachment 3

⁴ Coexistence International at Brandeis University 2009, *Country Studies Series: Ghana*, February, <http://www.brandeis.edu/coexistence/pubs/publications.html#country> - Accessed 8 April 2010 – Attachment 4

⁵ 'Corruption claims and rows tarnish Accra's record' 2009, *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 50., No. 21, 23 October, <http://www.africa-confidential.com/article/id/3290/Corruption-claims-and-rows-tarnish-Accra's-record> - Accessed 16 November 2009 – Attachment 5

⁶ US Department of State 2009, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008 – Ghana*, 25 February, Section 3 – Attachment 6

the two rounds of the election was generally orderly”.⁷ It remains to be seen whether the new political party, Nkrumah Never Dies Party (NNDP), formed in September 2009, which claims to be pursuing “political reforms” will act as a catalyst for any political instability.⁸

Ethnic Tensions

Ethnic tensions, as a potential source of instability, have played a relatively minor role in Ghana. The previously mentioned Brandeis University 2009 report argues that Ghana has been spared the violent ethnic conflicts and the civil wars that have plagued West Africa. Despite the fact that it was composed of diverse ethnic, linguistic and religious groups, the country was said to have enjoyed relative peace and stability since 1993. However, the report warns against complacency citing recent Afrobarometer findings which show that while the majority of Ghanaians (57%) perceived themselves as much Ghanaian as belonging to a specific ethnic group, the proportion of Ghanaians feeling only or more Ghanaian than their ethnic group was falling, while those feeling only or more ethnic was increasing. The report adds that during the rule of the previous government led by the NPP, the public perception was that the NPP favoured its ethnic members in public office appointments.⁹

The stoking of ethnic tensions was a feature in the 2008 election campaign. The level of ethnic rhetoric in the media’s reporting even prompted one of the candidates to issue an appeal to radio stations not to promote tribalism in national politics. The ethnic rhetoric was criticized by prominent civil society leaders. The Commonwealth Observers Group called the tribalism during the elections a “backward step for the maturing Ghanaian political system”.⁷ An article on Ghanaian news website *My Joy Online* accuses some members of the previous NPP Government of stoking tribal tensions in the interest of politics in the run-up to the elections.¹⁰

More recently, several articles discussed simmering tribal and ethnic tensions.¹¹ An article in the Ghana Web news site from January 2010 claims that the current NDC Government is not doing much to resolve tribal tension. It states that there are “elements in Ghana especially the so-called opinion leaders whose incorrigible mindset of tribal bigotry” would derail any efforts at inter-tribal harmony. The article warns that “unless our national leaders take bold actions to confront it now; Ghana might one day be engulfed in a civil war”.¹² Another article discusses the issue of one tribe being over represented in the Government and alleges that this resulted in the skewing of political appointments along tribal lines.¹³ The UK Home Office

⁷ Commonwealth Observer Group 2009, *Ghana Parliamentary And Presidential Elections 7 December 2008 and Presidential Run-Off Election 28 December 2008*, 17 February, pp.9, 34 & 43

<http://www.thecommonwealth.org/files/187673/FileName/GHANA2008ELECTIONS-COGREPORTFINAL.pdf> – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 7

⁸ ‘GHANA: New political party formed in Ghana’ 2009, *Ghanaian Times*, 22 September – Attachment 8

⁹ Coexistence International at Brandeis University 2009, *Country Studies Series: Ghana*, February

<http://www.brandeis.edu/coexistence/pubs/publications.html#country> – Accessed 8 April 2010 – Attachment 4

¹⁰ Kyei-Mensah-Osei, K. 2010 ‘Sacrificing Ghana’s tribal unity on the alter of Political Expediency’, *My Joy Online* website, 24 March <http://news.myjoyonline.com/features/201003/43789.asp> – Accessed 8 April 2010 – Attachment 9

¹¹ Nuamah, E. 2010 ‘Tuobodom crisis; A conflict between Tradition and Modernity’, *The Ghanaian Chronicle*, 14 April <http://allafrica.com/stories/200801281145.html> – Accessed 27 April 2010 – Attachment 10

¹² Baffour, E. 2010 ‘Oil + Tribal Bigotry + Hegemonism-a recipe for civil war in Ghana’, Ghana Web website, 16 January <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/features/artikel.php?ID=175177#> – Accessed 8 April 2010 – Attachment 11

¹³ Opare-Asamoah, Y. 2010 ‘The bestiality of tribal bigotry’, Ghana Web website, 23 February <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=177199> – Accessed 8 April 2010 – Attachment 12

cited several violent clashes between Kusasi and Mamprusi tribesmen in northern Ghana in 2008.¹⁴

Other Sources of Potential Instability

In the recent past Ghana has faced several human rights related issues which may, to varying degrees, contribute to potential instability. These include: deaths resulting from the excessive use of force by police; vigilante violence; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; police corruption and impunity; prolonged pre-trial detention; forcible dispersal of demonstrations; corruption in all branches of government; and politically motivated violence. The US DOS stated that the military continued to participate in law enforcement activities during 2009.¹⁵ The UK Home Office noted that within ethnic groups there were numerous small-scale conflicts mostly related to chieftaincy and land use issues.¹⁴ *Africa Confidential* adds that Ghana's "happy picture" is now threatened by a series of politically charged corruption cases on both sides of Parliament as well as a messy row with America's Kosmos Energy over plans to sell its stake in Ghana's Jubilee Field to the US oil giant ExxonMobil.¹⁶ The aforementioned Brandeis University report states that religious conflicts have also been part of Ghana's history, such as the conflict between the Ga traditionalists and the charismatic churches in Accra region, which also had an ethnic component. Other potential sources of instability cited include the North-South divide, rural-urban inequalities, and the dominance of the Akan ethnic group in economic and social life.¹⁷

Future

The existing tensions will be exacerbated by globalization, discovery of oil reserves in Western Ghana and the growing immigrant population, together combining to ensure that Ghana's current stability is not guaranteed into the future. However, the Brandeis University report felt that effective governance institutions, resilient traditional leaders and institutions, increasing support for democracy among ordinary Ghanaians, and positive inter-ethnic dialogue, gave Ghana a good chance of preserving its stability.¹⁷

3. Is there any information that the current government would not protect people from attack by members of the NPP?

Little information exists to suggest the current government would deliberately withhold protection from people under attack by members of the NPP. This is principally because the current government is led by the NDC and the NPP are now only the opposition. For instance, in January 2010 a police commander was shot at an NPP rally. It was not indicated that he was shot by NPP supporters, although this is likely. Authorities acted after the shooting and five people were arrested.¹⁸ In spite of its intentions, however, the Government's ability to provide adequate state protection has been questioned.

¹⁴ UK Home Office 2009, *Operational Guidance Note: Ghana*, 9 January, p 7 – Attachment 13

¹⁵ US Department of State 2010, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009 – Ghana*, March – Attachment 1

¹⁶ 'Corruption claims and rows tarnish Accra's record' 2009, *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 50., No. 21, 23 October, <http://www.africa-confidential.com/article/id/3290/Corruption-claims-and-rows-tarnish-Accra's-record> - Accessed 16 November 2009 – Attachment 5

¹⁷ Coexistence International at Brandeis University 2009, *Country Studies Series: Ghana*, February <http://www.brandeis.edu/coexistence/pubs/publications.html#country> – Accessed 8 April 2010 – Attachment 4

¹⁸ 'Commander Shot At NPP NR Congress' 2010, *Graphic Ghana*, 4 January <http://www.graphicghana.com/news/page.php?news=5895#> - Accessed 27 April 2010 – Attachment 14

NPP now the Alleged Victim

Prior to the December 2008 elections, while the NPP was in power, the party and its supporters had been accused of engaging in violence and intimidation. During this period, claims that the state may have not protected people from attack by NPP members may have been valid. In September 2008 a past President, Jerry Rawlings, accused the ruling NPP administration of being behind some high-profile murders.¹⁹ In October that year in the run-up to elections, NDC leaders including the constituency chairman and the party's parliamentary aspirant for Adenta were arrested in the Greater Accra Region and were detained by police.²⁰

However, with the NDC currently in government (since the December 2008 elections), accusations flowed in the opposite direction with the NPP now claiming to be the victim of violence and intimidation. In May 2009 *The Statesman* reported that the NPP planned to stage a demonstration to protest the alleged intimidation. It was claimed that NDC supporters "have taken the law into their hands, visiting an orgy of harassment on their counterparts in the NPP".²¹ The *Daily Guide* reported the May 2009 murder of an NPP party organiser by the son of the NDC Chairman of Agosa suburb.²² A subsequent article from April 2010 published allegations by the NPP that the NDC Government would "visit violence on... anybody perceived to be a leading member or supporter of the NPP" in the Bawku area.²³

State Protection

The Government's ability to protect people from attack by any group is tempered by authorities' ability to enforce the law. US DOS stated that there were "significant barriers" to the nationwide provision of police services to prevent and solve crimes such as homicide "including a lack of office accommodation, police vehicles, and equipment outside of the capital".²⁴ An *Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN)* article reported in June 2008 on the rise of vigilante groups in Accra – due to the poor level of policing. However, it also reported that the European Commission had provided funding for police and judicial reforms:

Ghana's judicial service has also rolled out ambitious judicial reforms including court automation, building more law courts, appointing more judges and compulsory weekend courts to speed up the pace of justice.²⁵

Targeting of opponents is not restricted to the state actively attacking people, but may also include deliberately withholding protection. However, the targeting of political opponents by the state seen during the presidency of Jerry Rawlings (1982-2000) had largely ended according to a Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board report from October 2006. The Director of the Centre of African Studies at the University of Edinburgh commented that:

By and large, the treatment of political dissidents or members of opposition and their families in Ghana today has improved noticeably. This is a departure from the past when political

¹⁹ 'Ex-president says ruling party behind recent "high-profile" murders in Ghana' 2008, *Joy FM*, 26 September – Attachment 15

²⁰ 'Two arrested for hosting presidential aspirant', *Joy FM*, 2 October – Attachment 16

²¹ 'NPP plans big demo: to protest NDC intimidation', *The Statesman*, 22 May – Attachment 17

²² 'NPP organizer beaten to death', *Daily Guide*, 3 June – Attachment 18

²³ Owusu, W. 2010 'NPP Warns Government', *The Ghanaian Chronicle*, 21 April
http://dailyguideghana.com/newd/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=8693&Itemid=243 - Accessed 27 April 2010 – Attachment 19

²⁴ US Department of State 2010, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009 – Ghana*, March – Attachment 1

²⁵ 'Ghana: Vigilante groups fill security vacuum' 2008, Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), Refworld Website, 23 June <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/486261232.html> - Accessed 8 April 2010 – Attachment 20

dissidents in Ghana were badly treated. It is increasingly becoming difficult, if not impossible, to mobilize violence to brutalize sections of society who peacefully oppose the regime and its policies. Citizens are not only enfranchised, but are free to demonstrate, without police permit, against state and government policies. And the last year has witnessed many such public demonstrations by members of the opposition, which were free and without government reprisal.

...These positive developments notwithstanding, there have been certain disquieting developments, which seem to suggest that, Ghana, whilst not yet a "failed state", is incapable of providing protection for some of her citizens.²⁶

Despite this improvement in the treatment of opponents, the police service was criticized repeatedly for incidents of brutality, corruption, and negligence. There were alleged delays in prosecuting suspects and rumours of police collaboration with criminals. The US DOS also suggested that there were "credible reports that police extorted money by acting as private debt collectors, by setting up illegal checkpoints, and by arresting citizens in exchange for bribes from the arrested persons' disgruntled business associates".²⁷

4. Where are the Ashanti Region?

The Ashanti Region is located in central Ghana, as identified on the attached map.²⁸

5. Deleted.

Attachments

1. US Department of State 2010, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009 – Ghana*, March.
2. Country profile: Ghana' 2010, *BBC News*, 9 February
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1023355.stm - Accessed 27 April 2010.
3. US Agency for International Development 2009, 'Ghana', November
http://www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/countries/ghana/ - Accessed 27 April 2010.
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5. 'Corruption claims and rows tarnish Accra's record' 2009, *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 50, No. 21, 23 October, <http://www.africa-confidential.com/article/id/3290/Corruption-claims-and-rows-tarnish-Accra's-record> - Accessed 16 November 2009.
6. US Department of State 2009, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008 – Ghana*, 25 February.

²⁶ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2006, *GHA101615.E - Ghana: Treatment of political dissidents or members of the opposition and their family members (2004 - 2006)*, 23 October - Attachment 21

²⁷ US Department of State 2010, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009 – Ghana*, March – Attachment 1

²⁸ 'Ashanti, Ghana' 2010, Wikimedia website
http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ea/Gold_Coast_Map_1896.jpg - Accessed 8 April 2010 – Attachment 22

7. Commonwealth Observer Group 2009, *Ghana Parliamentary And Presidential Elections 7 December 2008 and Presidential Run-Off Election 28 December 2008*, 17 February <http://www.thecommonwealth.org/files/187673/FileName/GHANA2008ELECTIONS-COGREPORTFINAL.pdf> – Accessed 1 April 2009.
8. ‘GHANA: New political party formed in Ghana’ 2009, *Ghanaian Times*, 22 September. (CISNET – Ghana: CX233941)
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11. Baffour, E. 2010 ‘Oil + Tribal Bigotry + Hegemonism-a recipe for civil war in Ghana’, Ghana Web website, 16 January <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/features/artikel.php?ID=175177#> - Accessed 8 April 2010.
12. Opare-Asamoah, Y. 2010 ‘The bestiality of tribal bigotry’, Ghana Web website, 23 February <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=177199> - Accessed 8 April 2010.
13. UK Home Office 2009, *Operational Guidance Note: Ghana*, 9 January.
14. ‘Commander Shot At NPP NR Congress’ 2010, *Graphic Ghana*, 4 January <http://www.graphicghana.com/news/page.php?news=5895#> - Accessed 27 April 2010.
15. ‘Ex-president says ruling party behind recent “high-profile” murders in Ghana’ 2008, *Joy FM*, 26 September. (CISNET – Ghana: CX211348)
16. ‘Two arrested for hosting presidential aspirant’, *Joy FM*, 2 October. (CISNET – Ghana: CX211804)
17. ‘NPP plans big demo: to protest NDC intimidation’, *The Statesman*, 22 May. (CISNET – Ghana: CX228165)
18. ‘NPP organizer beaten to death’, *Daily Guide*, 3 June. (CISNET – Ghana: CX227518)
19. Owusu, W. 2010 ‘NPP Warns Government’, *The Ghanaian Chronicle*, 21 April http://dailyguideghana.com/newd/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=8693&Itemid=243 - Accessed 27 April 2010.
20. Ghana: Vigilante groups fill security vacuum’ 2008, Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), Refworld Website, 23 June <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/486261232.html> - Accessed 8 April 2010.
21. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2006, *GHA101615.E -Ghana: Treatment of political dissidents or members of the opposition and their family members (2004 - 2006)*, 23 October. (REFINFO)

22. 'Ashanti, Ghana' 2010, Wikimedia website
http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ea/Gold_Coast_Map_1896.jpg -
Accessed 8 April 2010.
23. Deleted.
24. Deleted.
25. Deleted.
26. Deleted.